SEVEN ARROWS

Hyemeyohsts Storm

Explanation of medicine wheel

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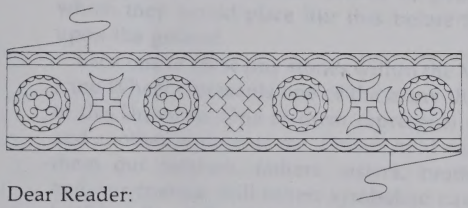
Expiration of motion sought



Dear Reader:

If you and I were sitting in a circle of people on the prairie, and if I were then to place a painted drum or an eagle feather in the middle of this circle, each of us would perceive these objects differently. Our vision of them would vary according to our individual positions in the circle, each of which would be unique.

Our personal perceptions of these objects would also depend upon much more than just the different positions from which we looked upon them. For example, one or more of us might suffer from color blindness, or from weak eyesight. Either of these two physical differences would influence our perceptions of the objects.

There are levels upon levels of perspectives we must consider when we try to understand our individual perceptions of things, or when we try to relate our own perceptions to those of our brothers and sisters. Every single one of our previous experiences in life will affect in some way the mental perspective from which we see the world around us.

Because of this, a particular object or event may appear fearful to you at the same time that it gives pleasure to me, or appears completely uninteresting to a third person. All things that we perceive stimulate our individual imaginations in different ways, which in turn causes us to create our own unique interpretations of them. Love, hate, fear, confusion, happiness, envy, and all the other emotions we feel, act upon us to paint our perceptions of things in different colors.

If the thing I were to place within our circle should be an abstraction, such as an idea, a feeling, or a philosophy, our perceptions of it would then be even more complicated than if the object had been a tangible thing. And further, the number of different perceptions of it would become greater and greater as more and more people were added to our circle. The perception of any object, either tangible or abstract, is ultimately made a thousand times more complicated whenever it is viewed within the circle of *an entire People as a whole.* The understanding of this truth is the first lesson of the Medicine Wheel, and it is a vital part of Sun Dance Teaching.

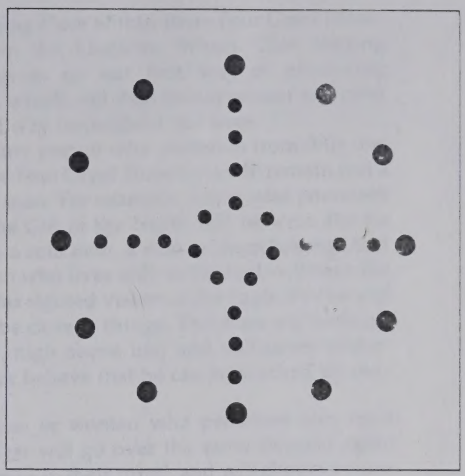
The Medicine Wheel

In many ways this Circle, the Medicine Wheel, can best be understood if you think of it as a

mirror in which everything is reflected. "The Universe is the Mirror of the People," the old Teachers tell us, "and each person is a Mirror to every other person."

Any idea, person or object can be a Medicine Wheel, a Mirror, for man. The tiniest flower can be such a Mirror, as can a wolf, a story, a touch, a religion or a mountain top. For example, one person alone on a mountain top at night might feel fear. Another might feel calm and peaceful. Still another might feel lonely, and a fourth person might feel nothing at all. In each case the mountain top would be the same, but it would be perceived differently as it reflected the feelings of the different people who experienced it. This book, *Seven Arrows*, is such a Mirror. It is a Medicine Wheel, just as you are.

Here is a drawing of a simple Medicine Wheel. Among the People, the Teachers usually constructed it from small stones or pebbles, which they would place like this before them upon the ground.

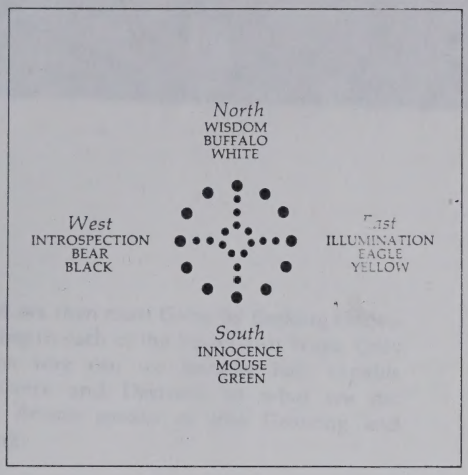


Each one of these tiny stones within the Medicine Wheel represents one of the many things of the Universe. One of them represents you, and another represents me. Others hold within them our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and our friends. Still others symbolize hawks, buffalo, elks and wolves. There are also stones which represent religions, governments, philosophies, and even entire nations. All things are contained within the Medicine Wheel, and all things are equal within it. The Medicine Wheel is the Total Universe.

Our Teachers tell us that all things within this Universe Wheel know of their Harmony with every other thing, and know how to *Give-Away* one to the other, except man. Of all the Universe's creatures, it is we alone who do not begin our lives with knowledge of this great Harmony.

All the things of the Universe Wheel have spirit and life, including the rivers, rocks, earth, sky, plants and animals. But it is only man, of all the Beings on the Wheel, who is a determiner. Our determining spirit can be made whole only through the learning of our harmony with all our brothers and sisters, and with all the other spirits of the Universe. To do this we must learn to seek and to perceive. We must do this to find our place within the Medicine Wheel. To determine this place we must learn to *Give-Away*.

The *Vision Quest*, or perceiving quest, is the way we must begin this search. We must all follow our Vision Quest to discover ourselves, to learn how we perceive of ourselves, and to find our relationship with the world around us.



The Powers

Among the People, a child's first Teaching is of the Four Great Powers of the Medicine Wheel.

To the North on the Medicine Wheel is found Wisdom. The Color of the Wisdom of the North is White, and its Medicine Animal is the Buffalo. The South is represented by the Sign of the Mouse, and its Medicine Color is Green. The South is the place of Innocence and Trust, and for perceiving closely our nature of heart. In the West is the Sign of the Bear. The West is the Looks-Within Place, which speaks of the Introspective nature of man. The Color of this Place is Black. The East is marked by the Sign of the Eagle. It is the Place of Illumination, where we can see things clearly far and wide. Its Color is the Gold of the Morning Star.

At birth, each of us is given a particular Beginning Place within these Four Great Directions on the Medicine Wheel. This Starting Place gives us our first way of perceiving things, which will then be our easiest and most natural way throughout our lives.

But any person who perceives from only one of these Four Great Directions will remain just a partial man. For example, a man who possesses only the Gift of the North will be wise. But he will be a cold man, a man without feeling. And the man who lives only in the East will have the clear, far sighted vision of the Eagle, but he will never be close to things. This man will feel separated, high above life, and will never understand or believe that he can be touched by anything.

A man or woman who perceives only from the West will go over the same thought again and again in their mind, and will always be undecided. And if a person has only the Gift of the South, he will see everything with the eyes of a Mouse. He will be too close to the ground and too near sighted to see anything except whatever is right in front of him, touching his whiskers.

There are many people who have two or three of these Gifts, but these people still are not Whole. A man might be a Bear person from the East, or an Eagle person of the South. The first of these men would have the Gift of seeing Introspectively within Illumination, but he would lack the Gifts of Touching and Wisdom. The second would be able to see clearly and far, like the Eagle, within Trust and Innocence. But he would still not know of the things of the North, nor of the Looks-Within Place.

In this same way, a person might also be a Golden Bear of the North, or a Black Eagle of the South. But none of these people would yet be Whole. After each of us has learned of our Beginning Gift, our First Place on the Medicine

Wheel, we then must Grow by Seeking Understanding in each of the Four Great Ways. Only in this way can we become Full, capable of Balance and Decision in what we do. *Seven Arrows* speaks of this Growing and Seeking.

The Touching

To Touch and Feel is to Experience. Many people live out their entire lives without ever really Touching or being Touched by anything. These people live within a world of mind and imagination that may move them sometimes to joy, tears, happiness or sorrow. But these people never really Touch. They do not live and become one with life.

The Sun Dancer believes that each person is a unique Living Medicine Wheel, powerful beyond imagination, that has been limited and placed upon this earth to Touch, Experience and Learn. The Six Grandfathers Taught me that each man, woman, and child at one time was a Living Power that existed somewhere in time and space. These Powers were without form, but they were aware. They were alive.

Each Power possessed boundless energy and beauty. These living Medicine Wheels were capable of nearly anything. They were beautiful and perfect in all ways except one. They had no understanding of limitation, no experience of substance. These Beings were total energy of the Mind, without Body or Heart. They were placed upon this earth that they might Learn the things of the Heart through Touching.

According to the Teachers, there is only one thing that all people possess equally. This is their loneliness. No two people on the face of this earth are alike in any one thing except for their loneliness. This is the cause of our Growing, but it is also the cause of our wars. Love, hate, greed and generosity are all rooted within our loneliness, within our desire to be needed and loved.

The only way that we can overcome our loneliness is through Touching. It is only in this way that we can learn to be Total Beings. God is a presence of this Total. *Heamavihio*, the Breath of Wisdom, and *Miaheyyun*, Total Understanding, are but two of the words in the Cheyenne language which express this Wholeness.

Medicines

This brings us back again to the Medicines. Each of us has as his personal Medicine a particular animal reflection. The characteristics of this reflection are determined by the nature of the animal itself, and also by the location of our individual Beginning Place on the Medicine Wheel. These two things, our Medicine Animal and our Beginning Place on the Medicine Wheel, together are the Beginning Gift to each of us from *Miaheyyun*.

For example, there are Eagle People, Elk People, Bear People, Wolf People, Pheasant People, Otter People, Buffalo People, Mice People, Rock People, Cloud People, and as many other kinds of People as there are kinds of living beings on this earth. And within each of these different kinds of People, there are the other differences of the Four Great Directions. Thus an Elk Person might be born a White Elk of the North, a Green Elk of the South, a Black Elk of the West, or a Yellow Elk of the East, depending upon the Direction of their Beginning Gift.

It would be impossible for me to tell you here of all the different Medicines, but I will speak to you of one of them, the Mouse. Mice live all their lives next to the ground, building their

nests and gathering their food among the roots of the tall grass and bushes of the prairie. Because of this, Mice never see things at a distance. Everything they can see is right in front of them, where they can sniff at it with their noses and Touch it with their whiskers. Their lives are spent in Touching things in this way, and in gathering seeds and berries to eat.

But since it is really people that we are talking about, the Medicines must be understood within the ways of people. A Mouse Person would be one who saw everything close up, and whose vision would be limited to the immediate world around him. He would be a gatherer of things. He might gather facts, information, material objects, or even ideas. But because he could not see far enough to connect his world with that of the great prairie of the world around him, he would never be able to use or understand all that he saw and gathered.

If a Mouse Person were to be born into the North, his Beginning Gift would be the Gift of the Mind. His Name might be White Mouse. He would be a wise Mouse Person, but he would not yet be Whole. To become Whole, he would first have to seek the South, the place of Heart, and find the Marriage of this Gift with his Beginning Gift. Then he would have to visit and have Intercourse with the things of the East, Illumination, and travel to the Looks-Within place of the West. He would be able to Grow and become a Full Person only by doing all of these things, which would give him an understanding of his own Nature.

In this way he would become able to make his decisions within the Balance of the Four Directions. A person with the Beginning Gift of the Mind must always try to include his Heart in his decisions. When he does this, he begins to turn upon the Medicine Wheel. A man can live out his entire life without ever finding more than what was already within him as his Beginning Gift, but if he wishes to Grow he must become a Seeker and Seek for himself the other Ways.

When you have done this yourself, and when you have reached a full Understanding of the different Medicines of men, you will never feel surprised or threatened by the actions or decisions of your Brothers and Sisters. This Understanding is held within the meaning of the Shields carried by the People, which were Mirrors of their Medicines.

The Shields

To Understand the Sun Dance, we must first gain an Understanding of the Shields. My Father, whose Name was Hyemeyohsts and who gave his Name to me, was a Shield Maker and my Teacher. Hyemeyohsts taught me the construction of many Personal Shields. He also taught me the construction, Painting and Medicine Ways of the other Shields: the Men's Shields, Women's Shields, Children's Shields, Peace Shields, and the Sacred Shields. This was Hyemeyohst's Gift to me, as it was his Gift from his Fathers and from the Medicine Power, the Great Spirit. It is *Miaheyyun's* Gift to all of us, in order that we might learn and become Sun Dancers together.

There were originally Twelve Sacred Shields. At the time of the annual Renewal these Twelve Sacred Shields were brought together, and placed inside the Twelve Forked Poles which formed the outer circle of the Sun Dance Lodge, the People's Lodge. But these Sacred Shields were never together except at Renewal time. They were never kept by any one Tribe, but were passed on from one People to another.